

What's the History of Lithium? How Does It Treat Bipolar Disorder? | Dr. Andrew Huberman

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Summary

The discovery of lithium as a treatment for bipolar disorder is a miraculous story. The key player in this story is Cade, an Australian physician and psychiatrist who was a prisoner of war during World War II. While observing his fellow inmates, Cade hypothesized that there was a chemical build-up in their brains that caused manic episodes and they urinated it out. He experimented with urine from manic patients and found that the uric acid in the urine was toxic for guinea pigs. He discovered that lithium had a calming effect when injected with the toxic urea in the guinea pigs. He then started using lithium in human patients and found a profound reduction in symptoms of mania. Cade published a paper on this discovery, which is now a classic study in the field of psychiatry.

Silo sample questions

- Who is the key player in the discovery of lithium as a treatment for bipolar disorder?
- What did Cade hypothesize about the cause of manic episodes?
- What did Cade discover about the urine from manic patients?
- What did Cade find when he injected lithium into guinea pigs?
- What were the results of Cade's experiments with lithium in human patients?

Topics

discovery of lithium

bipolar disorder

Cade

experiments

lithium effect

Key Takeaways

- The key player is a physician named Cade.
- Cade hypothesized that there was a build-up of a chemical in certain people's brains that makes them manic and they urinate that chemical out.
- Cade discovered that the urine from manic patients seemed to be more toxic for guinea pigs and he focused on the uric acid in the urine.
- Cade found that lithium had a calming effect on the guinea pigs injected with the toxic urea.
- Cade found a profound and positive effect of lithium in reducing symptoms of mania in human patients.

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